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May 11.

REV. HUMPHREY LLOYD, D.D., President, in the Chair.

John Aldridge, M. D., and George Lefroy, Esq., were elected Members of the Academy.

The reading of the Rev. N. J. Halpin's Paper, on some passages in the life of Shakspere, was resumed and concluded.

The object of this paper is to vindicate the poet's memory from aspersions thrown upon his character, as a father and a husband, by Malone, Drake, De Quincey, Moore, &c.

Those aspersions—unfounded in either fact or tradition—are chiefly inferences, rashly drawn, from the poet's last will and testament, and consist of two charges, viz.: favouritism towards one of his daughters, and neglect of his wife: which Drake lays down as “the most striking features” of that document. To these are added, from other sources, calumnies respecting the education of his children, and jealousy of his wife; all of which it is the object of the paper to refute.

The inference of favouritism towards his eldest daughter, deduced from the unequal division of his property, is shown to be false, by proving that the inequality was the result of the undutiful conduct of the younger, who had married a person of inferior station, who was either unable or unwilling to make a settlement upon her or her issue; whereas the elder had made a match to her father's entire satisfaction. Malone, Drake, &c. assert that, at the time of making his will, the poet was ignorant of his second daughter's marriage, and still spoke of her as an unmarried woman; whereas the reverse is the fact. He was aware of the marriage, and thereupon made the final disposition of his property; and though his resentment prevented him from mentioning the husband's name, he still indirectly recognizes the marriage, by including him as the husband

with whom, at the end of three years, his daughter may be found united in wedlock. The clauses of the will (from which these facts are elicited) are fully discussed, and the memory of Shakspere rescued from the charge of “favouritism” or unjust partiality.

The charge respecting his supposed neglect of his wife is next examined. It rests upon three points: the omission of her name in the first draft of his will; the neglect of any ostensible provision for her support; and the interlineation which conveys to her his “second best bed.” Malone, followed by Drake and others, interprets these facts into proofs of the unhappiness of the marriage through life, and the unfriendly feeling with which it closed in death. The last point, in particular, Malone construes into “cutting her off,” not with a shilling, but an old piece of furniture; and Moore translates it into “a bitter sarcasm.”

With reference to the first, Mr. Halpin argues that the poet’s omission of his wife’s name in the first draft of the will, and the subsequent interlineation, no more imply the absence of conjugal love, than the similar omission and interlineation of his friends’ and fellows’ names (Burbage, Hemings, and Condell) intimate his want of friendship for them—an inference which, in their case, the biographers never thought of drawing.

With reference to the second, Mr. H. concurs, to a certain extent, with Mr. Charles Knight’s solution of the point, namely, the provision already made by law,—the widow being entitled to dower, or the third of all her husband’s freehold property during her life; and further suggests, from other provisions of the will, the extreme probability that she and her children had been, previous to her marriage with the poet, provided for by a marriage settlement, and that she consequently had brought him a fortune.

With respect to the third, the vindication which Stevens suggested is confirmed by reference to the testamentary habits of the times; and the bequest is proved, by parallel with a

similar bequest of William Herbert, first Earl of Pembroke, to Queen Elizabeth, to have conveyed, not “a bitter sarcasm,” but the tender memorial of a love and attachment surviving the grave.

The calumnies derived from the will being thus disposed of, Mr. Halpin next adverts to the poet’s alleged neglect of the duty of a father in the education of his children. Drake asserts that neither of his daughters had been taught to write ; and sustains his assertion on the evidence of a legal document still existing, attested, as he thinks, by the mark of his daughter Judith.

This calumny the author treats as a superfetation of the similar degrading ignorance ascribed to the father of the poet, but without the shadow of evidence in the document on which it is founded. A fac-simile of the signatures to the entry on the books of the corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon (published by Mr. Knight), amongst which John Shakspere is said to have figured as a marksman, exhibits the name of that worthy corporator without any mark ; proves that the mark assigned to him belongs, in reality, to George Whately, the high bailiff for the current year ; and leads to the juster inference that, so far from not being able to write at all, John Shakspere probably wrote the best hand of any man in the corporation.

With reference to the daughters, the assertion as to both is disproved by the production of a *fac-simile* of the signature of the elder (Susanna) affixed, with her seal, to a legal instrument still existing ; and with reference to the younger, it is shewn to rest on an ignorant or wilful mistranslation of the word *signum* into mark, instead of seal, &c.

The paper goes on to argue, from the nearness of their births, that both daughters were educated together ; that whatever instructions or accomplishments the one had received, the other had at least the same opportunities of acquiring ; and that, as Susanna is recorded to have been a

woman of high attainments, it may be justly inferred that Judith was not deficient.

The character of Susanna Shakspere is then discussed, and her moral, intellectual, and poetical faculties asserted on the evidence of a contemporary. That her education embraced the Latin language, at least, is proved by the production of one indisputable, and several probable, pieces of her composition in Latin, as well as English metres; and the whole is brought to a conclusion by a vindication of her mother's memory, on the testimony to her virtues furnished in the monumental inscription placed over her remains by the piety and love of this exemplary daughter.

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Edward J. Cooper, Esq., made some remarks upon the four Comets which were lately visible, and which were all observed in one night at Markree—namely, Biela's double comet, the two comets of De Vico, and Brorson's comet. He likewise read a communication from Professor Schumacher respecting a fifth comet, which has just been discovered.

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The President commenced the reading of a paper “On the Variations of the Magnetic Declination at Dublin, as deduced from four years' observations.”

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